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Book Notices.

Blaikie's Bible History.

A Manual of Bible History in connection with the General History of the World. By Rev. W. G. Blaikie, D.D., LL.D. New Edition. Revised and enlarged. London and New York: T. Nelson & Sons. 1889, 12mo, pp. 504

There can be no question that this work by so eminent a student and teacher of the Bible has been very popular and exceedingly useful. Containing within a moderate compass a clear and accurate compendious view of biblical history, it has fairly distanced all competitors and holds the field almost alone. It is commendable, alike to author and publishers, that under these circumstances a new and revised edition has been prepared. As to the amount and character of the revision one is at a loss to determine without a careful comparison of former editions. No hint concerning the matter is given in the book itself. Use seems to have been made of recent Assyriological investigations, so that in this respect the work is fairly up to the times. No radical change has been made in the presentation of the material. The principles on which the book has been prepared remain the same. The material is divided into periods; the story of the period is retold largely in the order and form in which it appears in the biblical narrative; the side-lights thrown by the history of other lands upon the Scripture story are exhibited, and the whole work is thrown into convenient chapters and sections for study and recitation in schools.

It is no doubt true that these principles and methods of preparing a text-book on Bible History are regarded by many as the secret of the usefulness of this and similar works. It may fairly be questioned, however, whether the success which such books have achieved has not been attained partly in spite of them. Dr. Blaikie's book is the best attainable work of its class, but not a few teachers and students of the Bible are profoundly convinced that the text-books on the Bible are as a general rule one hundred years behind the times, and if the same methods and principles were applied in secular studies they would result in books which would be recognized as belonging to past generations. There is a cant phraseology of our present age which one hesitates to use in characterization either of men or of books; still no one word so fully sums up the qualities of books like this of Dr. Blaikie as the cant phrase, "not scientific." Every practical teacher knows what that phrase covers, though to express all its significance would require many words. The hope may be expressed—and it is a hope that shows some signs of being fulfilled—that ere long the number of our text-books on Bible history may be increased by a well organized manual, arranged on a scientific method, which will bring to the study of the historical material of the Scriptures as much interest and enthusiam in our schools and colleges as now it arouses of weariness and distaste. Till that time comes, Dr. Blaikie's book, excellent in its way, will continue to be used, where a handy and reliable Bible history is desired.